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Highlights: 2017 Public Service Employee Survey

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Highlights: 2017 Public Service Employee Survey

From Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

Overall

A total of 174,544 employees in 86 federal departments and agencies responded to the 2017 survey, for a response rate of 61.3% (71.4% in 2014).

Results have improved in many areas since 2014. The areas with the greatest improvements are:

- career development
- organizational performance
- empowerment
- senior management
- employee engagement

Results were less positive in 2017 than in 2014 for some questions about ethics in the workplace.

Employees were less likely in 2017 than they were in 2014 to indicate that their organization implements activities and practices that support a diverse workplace.

The 2017 results for harassment and discrimination were similar to the 2014 results.

More than half of employees indicated that they would describe their workplace as psychologically healthy, and 1 in 5 employees rated their level of work-related stress as high or very high.

Over two-thirds of employees indicated that their pay or other compensation has been affected by issues with the Phoenix pay system. Pay or other compensation-related issues were the top cause of stress at work, with approximately 1 in 3 employees indicating that they cause them stress to a large or very large extent.

Employee engagement

A majority of employees are engaged in their work and in their organization, and most indicators of engagement have improved since 2014. In 2017:

- 80% of employees indicated that they like their job, similar to 2014 (79%) and slightly lower than in 2011 (82%)
- 77% of employees reported that they get a sense of satisfaction from their work, an improvement from 2014 (74%) and similar to 2011 (76%)
- 68% of employees indicated that they are satisfied with their department or agency, an improvement from 2014 (64%) and 2011 (65%)
- 65% of employees felt valued at work (question not asked in previous surveys)

Leadership

As observed in previous surveys, employees tend to have more positive perceptions of their immediate supervisor than they do of their senior management. However, perceptions of both immediate supervisors and senior management have improved over time. In 2017:

- 77% of employees indicated that they can count on their immediate supervisor to keep his or her promises, an increase from 2014 and 2011 (75% and 74%, respectively)
- 57% of employees indicated that they have confidence in the senior management of their organization, an improvement from 2014 and 2011 (53% and 52%, respectively)

Workforce

Performance management

Overall, results related to performance management have improved since 2014. In 2017:

- 61% of employees indicated that they receive meaningful recognition for work well done, up from 2014 and 2011 (57% and 59%, respectively)
- 72% of employees believed that they have clear work objectives (question not asked in previous surveys)
- 73% of employees indicated that they receive useful feedback on their job performance, similar to 2014 (72%) and an increase from 2011 (70%)
- 40% of employees felt that unsatisfactory performance is managed effectively in their work unit, a slight increase from 2014 (38%)

Career development

The 2017 results show that employees feel more positive about opportunities for career development in their organization than they did in the past. In 2017:

- 57% of employees felt that their organization does a good job of supporting employee career development, an increase from 2014 and 2011 (52% and 55%, respectively)
- 48% of employees believed that they have opportunities for promotion in their organization, given their education, skills and experience, a great improvement from 2014 and 2011 (42% and 44%, respectively).

Empowerment

Results relating to empowerment have improved since 2014. In 2017:

- 69% of employees believed that they have support at work to provide a high level of service, higher than in 2014 (66%) but lower than in 2011 (75%)
- 67% of employees indicated that they are encouraged to be innovative or to take initiative in their work, up from 2014 (63%)

Workplace

Work-life balance and workload

Overall, results for questions about work-life balance and workload were more positive than in previous surveys. In 2017:

- 74% of employees felt that they have support at work to balance their work and personal life, up from 2014 (71%) and similar to 2011 (75%)
- 80% of employees indicated that their immediate supervisor supports the use of flexible work arrangements, higher than in 2014 and 2011 (78% and 75%, respectively)
- 73% of employees reported that they can complete their assigned workload during their regular working hours, an improvement from 2014 and 2011 (70% and 69%, respectively)

Organizational performance

The survey asked employees whether the quality of their work suffers as a result of certain factors. Overall, in 2017 employees were less likely than they were in 2014 to indicate that the quality of their work suffers because of these factors. For example:

- 41% of employees indicated that the quality of their work suffers because of having to do the same or more work but with fewer resources, lower than in 2014 and 2011 (48% and 44%, respectively)
- 43% of employees indicated that the quality of their work suffers because of too many approval stages, lower than in 2014 and 2011 (48% and 45%, respectively)
- 33% of employees indicated that the quality of their work suffers because of a lack of stability in their organization, lower than in 2014 (37%) and similar to 2011 (34%)

Respectful workplace

Most employees believe that their workplace is respectful. The 2017 results relating to respect in the workplace were similar to the 2014 results. In 2017:

- 80% of employees believed that individuals in their work unit behave in a respectful manner, the same as in 2014 (80%)
- 80% of employees felt that their organization treats them with respect, similar to 2014 (79%) and higher than in 2011 (76%)

Results relating to employees' perceptions of their organization's support for diversity, however, were less positive than they were in 2014. In 2017, 76% of employees indicated that their organization implements activities and practices that support a diverse workplace, a decrease from 2014 (79%).

Ethical workplace

Some results pertaining to ethics in the workplace were less positive than in 2014. In 2017:

- 74% of employees indicated that they would know where to go for help in resolving the situation if they were faced with an ethical dilemma or a conflict between values in the workplace, lower than in 2014 (77%) but the same as in 2011 (74%)
- 62% of employees indicated that they are satisfied with how interpersonal issues are resolved in their work unit, a slight decrease from 2014 (64%)

Harassment

In 2017, 18% of employees indicated that they had been the victim of harassment on the job in the past 2 years, similar to the result for 2014 (19%).

The following results relating to harassment were also very similar to those of 2014. For detailed comparisons, see the summary report.

- Individuals with authority (63%) and colleagues (51%) were the most frequently cited sources of harassment
- Offensive remarks (57%), unfair treatment (48%), and being excluded or ignored (45%) were the most common types of harassment experienced
- 8% of the employees who indicated that they had been harassed filed a grievance or formal complaint, and 25% took no action

Discrimination

In 2017, 8% of employees indicated that they had been the victim of discrimination on the job in the past 2 years, the same as the result for 2014 (8%).

The following results relating to discrimination were also very similar to those of 2014. For detailed comparisons, see the summary report.

- Individuals with authority (79%) and colleagues (38%) were the most frequently cited sources of discrimination
- Sex (30%), age (25%) and race (24%) were the most common types of discrimination experienced
- 7% of employees who indicated that they had been discriminated against filed a grievance or formal complaint, and 48% took no action

Workplace well-being

In 2017, questions were added to the Public Service Employee Survey to measure different aspects of workplace well-being: the psychological health of the workplace and work-related stress.

Psychological health of workplace

- 80% of employees indicated that their immediate supervisor seems to care about them as a person
- 81% of employees indicated that their immediate supervisor creates an environment where they feel free to discuss with him or her matters that affect their well-being at work
- 67% of employees indicated that their organization does a good job of raising awareness of mental health in the workplace

- 56% of employees described their workplace as being psychologically healthy

Work-related stress

- 20% of employees indicated that they have high or very high levels of work-related stress
- Pay or other compensation-related issues were the top source of stress at work, with 34% of employees indicating that these issues cause them stress to a large or very large extent
- Other prevalent causes of stress include:
    - not enough employees to do the work (32%)
    - heavy workload (26%)
    - competing or constantly changing priorities (22%)
    - unreasonable deadlines (21%)

Compensation

The 2017 survey included several new questions about issues related to compensation and the Phoenix pay system.

Results include the following:

- 69% of employees indicated that their pay or other compensation has been affected by issues with the Phoenix pay system
- 36% of employees indicated that they were satisfied with the support they received from their organization to help resolve their pay or other compensation issues
- 16% of employees indicated that they were satisfied with the support they received from the Pay Centre to help resolve those issues

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